

they have worked with Senators from across the aisle to advance this legislation through the legislative process. It is thanks to their hard work that we are debating this bipartisan bill today.

The junior Senator from Ohio has called CARA the only bipartisan legislation that includes a comprehensive and evidence-based approach to help communities combat this epidemic. It would strengthen prescription drug monitoring programs, it would improve treatment initiatives, it would expand prevention and education, and it would give law enforcement more of the tools it needs to fight back against this epidemic.

It is no wonder this bipartisan legislation is supported by more than 130 national anti-drug groups. In a recent letter, they noted the only way to “stop and reverse current trends” was with a comprehensive approach, such as that included in the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2015, that leverages evidence-based law enforcement and health care services, including treatment.

So this bill takes the kind of comprehensive approach that is needed and at the same time, as these groups also noted in their letter, “the cost of the bill is kept low” with “no impact on mandatory spending.”

I ask colleagues to join with us in working to pass this bipartisan authorization bill. We will also have opportunities through the appropriations process this spring to continue important funding, just as we did last year. Indeed, just a few months ago we appropriated \$400 million to opioid-specific programs—nearly one-third more than what the Senate appropriated the preceding year—and we understand that all \$400 million of those funds still remains available to be spent today. That is right. All \$400 million remains available to be spent.

I sincerely hope our friends across the aisle will join us in supporting this legislation to address our national crisis. This is an important bill for each of us in this Chamber, and I look forward to taking action today to get us closer to seeing it become law. I have talked about the urgency and the multifaceted complexity associated with this epidemic, and I want to underline the hard work being done in the Senate to address it.

The chairs of the Judiciary Committee and the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, whom I recognized earlier, have been looking at ways to both improve law enforcement tools and increase education and awareness respectively. The chair of the Committee on Finance has, as his committee explored in a hearing last week, been focused on how this issue affects our child welfare system. And of course, we again recognize the cooperation of Members of both parties—chairs and ranking members and a bipartisan list of sponsors on both sides of the aisle.

Working together across the aisle—with State and local governments,

agencies and law enforcement—we can help end this crisis once and for all. I look forward to taking the next step toward that objective later today.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Mr. REID. Madam President, “History won’t forget this misstep by Grassley,” this poster says. “History won’t forget this misstep by Grassley.” That is from the Burlington Hawk Eye, Iowa’s oldest newspaper. That is what they said. It is the headline from the oldest newspaper, as I indicated—the Burlington Hawk Eye.

The misstep referenced here is the unprecedented statement by the senior Senator from Iowa and the Republican leader to deny the President the right to fill the current Supreme Court vacancy. The article ends with this declaration:

A few weeks back, when the longest-tenured U.S. Senator from Iowa passed a vote that gave him the record of most consecutive votes in the Senate, we lauded his service to us. We noted in casting votes on matters before the Senate, he was doing what Iowans elected him to do. We gave Grassley an attorney for that. We take it back.

“We take it back.” That is a blistering statement, a revealing statement, a substantive statement. “We take it back.”

There is a lesson that Senator GRASSLEY and my Republican colleagues should learn from this editorial. By refusing to give President Obama’s Supreme Court nominee a meeting, a hearing or a vote, they are abandoning the oath of office they swore when they became Senators. This abdication of their constitutional responsibilities will epitomize their work as Senators. Whatever they may have accomplished during their careers will be secondary to their decision to place electoral politics over their job.

Remember that our job here is to vote. That is what we swore to do—to follow the Constitution. And the Constitution couldn’t be clearer on this issue. So the stakes should even be higher for Senator GRASSLEY and the other Republican Senators. Why? Because as chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Senator GRASSLEY presides over one of the most important and prestigious committees in the entire Senate. This has been the case for 200 years—200 years.

The Senate Judiciary Committee was established 200 years ago. In 1816, it was one of the original 11 standing committees. Twenty decades have passed. That is how long the committee has been in operation. Throughout history, Judiciary Committee

chairs have traditionally wielded immense power—from President Martin Van Buren, when he was in the Senate, to Senator Ted Kennedy, Senator Arlen Specter, and Senator JOE BIDEN.

Judiciary Committee chairmen have historically prized their independence and guarded it at all costs from being manhandled for partisan purposes. It was so independent, in fact, that past chairmen have stood firm in the face of opposition from Presidents and Senate leadership.

At crucial times in American history, the Senate and the Nation have looked to the Judiciary Committee to do the right thing. During the Civil War, Chairman Lyman Trumbull of Illinois and his committee authored the Thirteenth Amendment. The Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery during the Civil War. We know that during that period of time there was great consternation as to what should be done. Even the great President Lincoln had trouble deciding what should be done during the early days of the Civil War.

In 1889, Chairman George Hoar of Massachusetts and his committee drafted the Sherman Antitrust Act, refusing to give in to the special interests of Carnegie, Vanderbilt, and the Rockefeller monopolies. That was big-time independence.

In 1937, Chairman Henry Ashurst from Arizona, who was born in Winnemucca, NV, led his committee in standing firm against President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s attempt to pack the Supreme Court. Chairman Ashurst was a Democrat, just like President Roosevelt. Yet Ashurst and his committee maintained their independence, even against the wishes of Senate Majority Leader Alben Barkley, a longtime Senator who became Vice President later. Imagine that. He was the Senate majority leader. He was from Kentucky. Imagine that Judiciary Committee chair standing up to a majority leader from Kentucky.

The accomplishments of these powerful chairmen and many others are the historic models against which the senior Senator from Iowa will be measured. If he keeps his current obstruction, history will not be kind to his tenure as chairman of the committee. As of today, the chairman has yielded his committee’s long-held authority and independence to the Republican leader for the sole purpose of weakening President Obama, of weakening the Presidency of the United States, and obstructing the Senate’s work.

The chairman has turned the impartial reputation of the Judiciary Committee into an extension of the Trump campaign. Just last month Chairman GRASSLEY spoke at a rally for Donald Trump in Iowa. At that rally, the chairman said:

We’ve had this trend going this way, away from the basic principles that established our government. And so we have an opportunity, once again, to make America great again.

Before I close, let's remember what he said: "We've had this trend going this way, away from the basic principles that established our government."

My friend from Iowa would do well to look at his own committee as it trends away from—again, the quote, "away from the basic principles that established our government." That is what the Senator from Iowa said at the Trump rally.

Even now, he and his committee are wasting millions in taxpayer dollars developing partisan opposition research on Secretary Clinton. It has been going on for many months, more than a year, including asking for maternity leave records for staffers and time sheets from her office—just basic staff people. For months, Senator GRASSLEY blocked the confirmation of vital State Department officials, even career Foreign Service officers who are here, so we could give them a raise after their valiant service all around the world. He held that up, and people couldn't understand it. It had nothing to do with Secretary Clinton. He did it as a way to weaken the Presidency of President Obama. What he has done is damage U.S. diplomacy worldwide.

Election day is more than 8 months away, but it is affecting nearly every action taken by the Grassley Judiciary Committee. There is much more at stake than Senator GRASSLEY's reputation. When the committee's independence is threatened by partisan politics, the future of this institution hangs in the balance, and when the Senate is undermined, our democracy is undermined. Future generations will suffer irreparably if the Senator from Iowa continues to do the bidding of the Republican leader and the Donald Trumps of the new Republican Party.

Senator GRASSLEY and I have worked together for three decades. I served a couple terms in the House. Then I came here. My seat was way back there. When I gave my maiden speech, my first speech, I talked about the Taxpayer Bill of Rights, an idea I had in the House and I couldn't get past first base.

Presiding in the Senate that day was Senator David Pryor from Arkansas, who was chairman of the subcommittee on the Internal Revenue Service. Senator GRASSLEY was also listening. They both contacted me. In fact, I received a note from Senator Pryor and a call from Senator GRASSLEY saying: I like that legislation. I will work to help you. And they did, and we got that passed. So I have nothing personal against Senator GRASSLEY. I like him. He helped me pass something that was landmark legislation as a brandnew freshman Senator, but today, as a U.S. Senator, I have a duty to speak when the Republican Senate refuses to follow its constitutional obligations to provide advice and consent on the President's Supreme Court nomination.

As a Senator, I have a duty to demand that the Judiciary Committee

considers important judicial nominees, especially—especially—someone to fill a vacancy on the Supreme Court. As Senate Judiciary chair, the senior Senator from Iowa has a job to do. I repeat, my criticism is not personal. It is professional and it is substantive.

The senior Senator from Iowa outlined that job himself when he assumed the chairmanship of the Judiciary Committee. When he took over as chairman, he promised Republicans would "restore the Senate to the deliberative body that the founders intended." Listen to that. That is what he said, to "restore the Senate to the deliberative body that the founders intended." That is a quote.

Another quote. He said he took the responsibility of "vetting of nominees for lifetime appointments to the federal judiciary very seriously."

The senior Senator from Iowa is failing this commitment that he made to himself. He made it. He made the commitment to "restore the Senate to the deliberative body that the founders intended." The Founders are the people who wrote the Constitution. He is the first chair of this important committee to take the unprecedented step of refusing to meet, conduct hearings or hold a vote on a Supreme Court nomination. He is following the Republican leader's call to refuse the President's nominee a meeting, a hearing or a vote. The senior Senator from Iowa, of all people, should know how important a vote is.

My friend has a lot of rollcall votes, 7,545 consecutive votes as of today, but what good are 7,500 consecutive votes if you simply sweep the votes you don't like to take under the rug? It taints this achievement. If he doesn't like President Obama's nominee, then he doesn't have to vote for the nominee, but don't run from a hard vote. Don't hide. What good is a chairmanship if it is just a rubberstamp for partisan politics? What good is a chairmanship if it is used to weaken the Senate and disrupt our Constitution's system of checks and balances? And that is what it does.

Last week the Des Moines Register published an open letter from one of Senator GRASSLEY's former employees. It was stunning. He worked in the Senate. This man's words capture what is at stake:

The institution of the Senate has managed to perform its constitutional obligations for well over 200 years. Every single nominee for the Supreme Court that has not withdrawn from consideration has received a vote within 125 days. Today, I feel nothing but shame for the fact that my senator, my former friend, will be bringing that unbroken history to an end.

That was the headline last week in the Des Moines Register, Iowa's largest newspaper.

I hope the chairman of the Judiciary Committee doesn't continue down this path. It will not benefit him, his committee, the Senate, the State of Iowa or this great country. Instead, he should follow the examples of his pred-

ecessors and give President Obama's Supreme Court nominee a meeting, a hearing, and a vote. He simply should do his job. If he doesn't, history will never forget this unprecedented misstep. History will never forget this misstep by Senator GRASSLEY.

I yield the floor.

Madam President, I ask the Chair to announce the business for the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 5 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from West Virginia.

COMPREHENSIVE ADDICTION AND RECOVERY BILL

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam President, as we are all sadly aware, the United States is experiencing an epidemic of drug overdose deaths. The statistics are just startling. Since 2000, the rate of deaths from drug overdoses has increased 137 percent, including a 200-percent increase in overdose deaths attributed to the use of opioids.

West Virginia has the unfortunate distinction of leading the Nation in drug-related overdose deaths—more than twice the national average. As I travel across the State, I hear constantly about the devastation caused by this epidemic. West Virginia communities are grappling with the seriousness and pain of addiction. No family or community—mine included—is immune from this pain.

As one of my constituents put it, "We must give our young people a reason not to start using something that robs them of everything they have."

Other West Virginians have bravely shared their family's stories of addiction's pain with me. In the powerful words of one of my constituents, "It only takes a few seconds to use drugs—but a lifetime to fight."

Drug addiction is a disease that knows no boundaries, and West Virginia is certainly not alone in this fight. My colleagues in the Senate—including, I am sure, the Acting President pro tempore—return each week with similar stories. No matter our political party, we should all agree on one thing, we must act to change these horrifying statistics and to save lives.

Some steps have already been taken to address this drug epidemic. The appropriations bill we passed last December included funding to expand prevention efforts. It included improved data collection and new treatment services, training for our servicemembers who